

Dan Fisk
Testimony Regarding H.B. 4503-H.B. 4507
House Agriculture Committee
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My name is Dan Fisk. I farm 1,100 acres and milk approximately 525 dairy cows on my farm in Sterling, Michigan. My farm is located in Adams Township in Arenac County. We had been hearing reports of wild hog sightings from hunters for several years, but our first experience with them was spring 2008. I cash rent 25 acres of farmland about 1 ½ miles south of the farm. My farmstead, along with the rented parcel, border a large private hunting club - all dense forest, swampland and no county roads or homes for several miles (about 3,600 acres).

The landowner that I rent from lives downstate and only uses the remainder of his property for turkey and deer hunting. In May, 2008, I planted his field to corn on a Tuesday afternoon. Four days later, on Saturday, he came to the farm to tell me he had come up for a weekend turkey hunt. It was almost dark when he drove to the back end of the field to put up his blind for the next mornings hunt. He thought he was seeing deer running to the woods, but they were too short. What he saw was several dozen wild hogs and they were rutting up my corn seed.

I had never heard of such a thing, but went with him to look. The west end of the field, along the woods, had been completely ruined. Right up the rows, exactly two inches deep and as side as their snouts, they had dug up and eaten every single kernel of seed corn. The story went through the farming community fast and over the next few days pickups with farmers and hunters were back there to see for themselves. (I can get you a dozen witnesses.) I had to re-plant about 14 acres, after a week of hunters out there told us they hadn't seen a hog.

That's when we realized just how smart and elusive these animals are. After 20-30 people had walked around in the field, the hogs never came back. We did learn the difference between a hog track and deer track and started looking at different fields for hog signs. We found evidence in other areas, but the best was about ½ mile west of our freestall barns.

My wife, a very avid hunter, started a summer-long pursuit of the hogs and after hundreds of hours over several months, she did kill one about 200 yards behind the barns at 11:00 p.m. We have had large sections of alfalfa fields rutted up and have chased hogs out of corn fields when chopping or combining. I know of about 15 hogs that were killed by deer hunters in 2010 within a three mile radius of our farm.

We have learned that hogs are almost exclusively nocturnal and have no natural enemies in the wild. Contrary to some "experts," hogs do re-produce year around, even in winter. They can survive on and eat almost anything including green grass, alfalfa, berries, nuts, other dead animals, and any grain or cash crop grown in Michigan.

If the destruction of cropland is not enough, research shows that these wild hogs can carry as many as 30 different viral and bacterial diseases that can transmit to our livestock, including dairy cows. One of these diseases is bovine tuberculosis which is a serious threat to Michigan's dairy industry. I question why we would want to jeopardize the strides our state has made in eradicating Bovine TB given the tremendous amount of time and money spent on this disease. It is critical that we do all that we can to ban and eradicate wild hogs from our state due to the serious threat they pose to the agriculture industry.

We are way past the question of are there wild feral hogs in rural Michigan. What needs to be done now is to make absolutely certain there will be no more accidental releases of these very destructive animals into our state.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.